

Saturday Magazine.

No. 106.

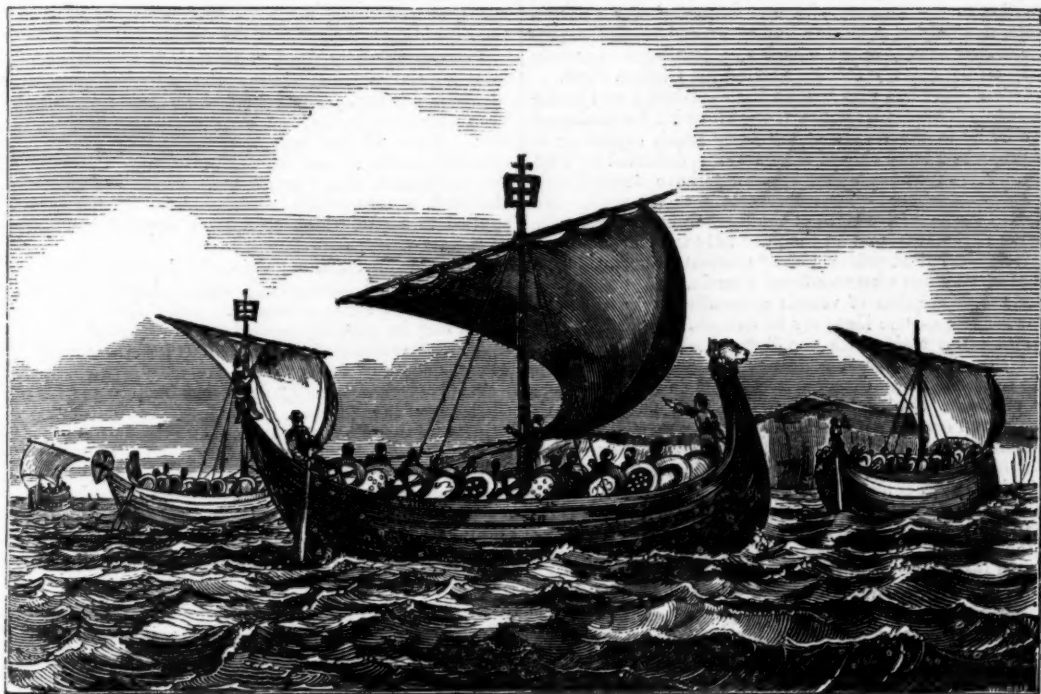
SUPPLEMENT,

FEBRUARY, 1834.

 { PRICE
ONE PENNY

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE COMMITTEE OF GENERAL LITERATURE AND EDUCATION,
APPOINTED BY THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE ROYAL NAVY OF GREAT BRITAIN.



SHIPS OF WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR.—1066.

EVERY THING that can tend to illustrate the history of the ROYAL NAVY, must always be regarded with feelings of the highest interest by Britons. Associated with the most brilliant passages of our annals, the essential protection of our mercantile enterprise and national prosperity, and rendered illustrious by the names and deathless examples of a Nelson, a Collingwood, or a Blake, it is difficult to reflect on the "wooden walls" of our country, without a glow of enthusiasm, or burst of patriotic feeling. It cannot, therefore, be either an uninteresting, or an unimportant task, to trace the rise and progress of the British Navy, from the slender "coracles" of the aboriginal inhabitants of these islands, to the magnificent structures which float, by the aid of science, in majesty on the deep; and it has been our object, as far as could be effected within the limits assigned to us in this paper, to concentrate, in a chronological narrative, the most important events which have distinguished the NAVAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND.

The subject may properly be divided into three periods. In the first we shall embrace the period between the invasion of Britain by the Romans, and the commencement of the reign of Henry the Eighth; the second will end with the death of George the Second; and the third will comprehend what may justly be termed the "golden era" of British naval history; viz., from the accession of George the Third to the present time.

SECTION I. (B.C. 52, to A.D. 1509.)

THE inhabitants of the British isles appear, at an early period, to have possessed some acquaintance with maritime affairs. We learn from the Welsh Triads, that the ancient name of Britain was *Clas Merddin*, the "Sea-defended green-spot," an appellation (as has been well remarked by one of the most eminent of our writers,) which may seem

to have been prophetic. At the period of the invasion of Britain by the Roman general, Julius Cæsar, fifty-two years before the commencement of the Christian era, the Britons, or *Cymry*, certainly possessed a naval force; and, in an engagement which took place between the Roman fleet and that of the Veneti and their allies, the Britons, the vessels of the latter are said to have been so firmly constructed, that the beaks of the Roman ships could with difficulty make any impression on them. These vessels were built of oaken planks; their sails were made of skins, and their anchors were attached to iron chains or cables. The barks, however, which were generally used by the Britons, were constructed of osier twigs, covered with skins, and resembled, in construction, the fragile fishing-boats, or *coracles*, still used on the rivers of Wales.

The Saxons, who settled in Britain about the middle of the fifth century, and who had been previously renowned for their piracies at sea, seem to have been impressed with the necessity of keeping up a formidable marine. Their vessels, we are told by Aneurin, a Welsh bard, "were single-masted, carrying one square sail. They had curved bottoms, and their prows and poops were adorned with the heads and tails of monsters."

King Alfred, who ascended the throne in 872, has generally been considered as the founder of our maritime power. At that time England was overrun by the Danes, and Alfred, with the wisdom and sagacity which distinguished all his actions, speedily perceived that the most effectual method of ridding his country of its foes, was by crippling their power at sea. He commanded his first fleet in person, was extremely successful in his naval engagements, and is said to have suggested a variety of improvements in the structure, as well as to have greatly increased the size of his vessels, some of the largest of which carried at least sixty oars.

After the death of Alfred, the naval power of England seems to have lain dormant until the invasion of William the Conqueror, in 1066. It is true that, in the tenth century, we read of the vast fleets possessed by King Edgar, but, like the other naval armaments of the early ages, they must chiefly have been composed of small boats. In 1066 William sailed for the coast of England, with a fleet of nearly 900 vessels, (of the nature of which the engraving in the preceding page presents an illustration,) and landing near Pevensey, in Sussex, with an army computed at 60,000 men, gained, in a few days, the battle of Hastings, which led to the rapid subjugation of the whole kingdom. The Normans had always manifested considerable regard to the sea, and the position in which the Conqueror was placed after gaining the English throne, rendered a strict attention to the improvement and extension of the navy a matter not only of prudence but of necessity. To contribute to this result, he gave exclusive privileges to certain towns on the coast, which were called the Cinque Ports.

Richard the First, who bore so distinguished a part in the Crusades, fitted out large fleets, one of which he conducted from Sicily to the shores of the Holy Land, capturing in his progress a large ship of the Saracens, defended by 1300 men. His successor, John, appears to have devoted considerable attention to the improvement of the navy. He asserted the exclusive right of the English nation to the dominion of the seas, and in the year 1214 issued a mandate to his chief admiral, ordering him "to arrest, seize, and make prizes of all ships whatever found therein."

Of the description of vessels generally employed in the following reign, some idea may be formed from the following account of an action with the French, who "with eighty stout ships," threatened a descent on the Kentish coast. This squadron being observed by Hubert de Burgh, Governor of Dover Castle, he put to sea with forty English vessels, and having got to windward of the enemy, and run down many of their smaller craft, attacked the others with *quick-time*, "which blinded them so effectually, that all their ships were either taken or sunk."

The engraving in page 76 represents the class of vessels used for the transport of troops and horses to the Mediterranean during the Crusades. The ship on shore was adapted for the latter purpose; the opening, or as it was styled the "port," (whence the term *port-hole*,) was caulked up after the horses had all been shipped, and was under water when the vessel floated. Ships of war seem then to have been provided with at least one tower, which was called the "castle of the ship."

In the reign of Edward the First, the first English admiral was appointed,—Roger de Leybourn, *Admirallus maris regie*, A.D. 1297. The reign of Edward the Third, (1327-77,) was greatly distinguished for successes at sea and on land, as well as for the advancement of the commercial prosperity of the country. The most interesting events in this reign, when England began to assume a high rank as a naval power, are the battle of Sluys, on the coast of Flanders, and the siege of Calais. The English fleet off Sluys, which was commanded by the king in person, perceiving, saith the old chronicler, "on their approach, that the French ships were linked together with chains, and that it was impossible for them to break their line of battle, retired a little, and stood back to sea. The French, deceived by this feint, broke their order and pursued the English, who they thought fled before them." The English then engaged, and, after a battle which lasted thirteen hours, defeated their opponents with immense loss. Thirty thousand French were slain, "of whom numbers, through fear, jumped off their own craft into the sea, and were miserably drowned: 200 great ships were taken, in one of which only there were 400 dead bodies." This account is evidently greatly exaggerated. The armament which was fitted out against Calais in 1347, was the largest which had yet quitted England, consisting of 738 vessels, navigated by 14,956 seamen; twenty ships only, however, of this number, belonged to the Royal navy. During the siege, which lasted eleven months, the allowance "to a marinere for his diet by the daye was iiii." In the reign of Edward the Third the bowsprit seems first to have been used.

From this period, with the exception of the short, but glorious, reign of Henry the Fifth, until the latter end of the fifteenth century, there is nothing of interest in our naval annals. Nautical knowledge, however, was gradually extending, and a variety of inventions and improvements were introduced into the marine. The use of cannon at sea, and the invention of the compass were the most im-

portant of these, and to the latter may probably be attributed the discovery of the New World. Considerable difference of opinion has existed amongst naval authors, as to the period when cannon were first used in naval warfare; Charneck, generally no mean authority in such matters, affirms that they were not introduced until the reign of Henry the Seventh; but there is conclusive authority for stating that they were employed for this purpose so early as the thirteenth century, in a sea-engagement between the king of Tunis and the Moorish king of Seville. They were also used by the Venetians at sea about the year 1380; and Froissart speaks of cannon having been used in the Flemish fleet, which was taken off Cadsand, in 1387, by the English, under the command of the Earl of Arundel. The guns were not then, as now, pointed through embrasures, or port-holes, but were mounted so as to fire from the top-side, or gun-wale, of the vessel.

The engraving at page 77 represents the style of shipping which prevailed during the principal part of the fifteenth century. The poop and fore-castle seem to have been extremely bulky, and disproportionate in their elevation. Some of the sails were splendidly adorned with armorial bearings; and we recognise, near the summit of the main-mast, the "round top," where the pilots were stationed, a term which is yet used in the navy, though applied to a part which occupies a very different position on the mast.

Henry the Seventh, on gaining the throne in 1485, put the navy, which had been greatly neglected, into a respectable condition. In 1488, a large ship called the *Great Harry*, which may be properly termed the first ship of the British navy, was built at a cost of 14,000*l*. It had three masts, and was accidentally destroyed by fire at Woolwich, in 1553.

We have now brought down our notices to the reign of Henry the Eighth, who may be designated the founder of the ROYAL NAVY. Strictly speaking, before this period there was no national establishment. In time of war, the requisite number of vessels, many of which can hardly be considered in any other light than as mere transports, were furnished by different sea-ports. The Cinque-ports, and their dependencies, (Dover, Hastings, Sandwich, Rye, Winchelsea, Hythe and Romney,) on condition of certain privileges, were bound by their tenure, to furnish the king with fifty-seven (and sometimes a much greater number of) ships, each containing twenty-one men and a boy, for fifteen days, once in every year, free of all charge; but in case of their being detained for longer service, they were paid and victualled by the king; the master of a vessel receiving six-pence, and the seamen three-pence a day each.

SECTION II. (1509—1760).

THE recent discovery of the vast continent of America, gave an extraordinary impulse to maritime affairs, about the period of the accession of Henry the Eighth. That monarch settled by his own prerogative the constitution of the Royal Navy; he founded the dock-yards of Woolwich, Deptford, and Portsmouth; he made laws for the planting and preservation of timber; he established the "fraternitie," or corporation of the Trinity House, for the improvement of navigation and the protection of commerce; he instituted an Admiralty and a Navy Office, under the direction of commissioners; increased the salaries of the officers and seamen, and placed the naval service, for the first time, on a distinct footing. In 1512, considerable advantages were gained by a fleet which was fitted out against the French, under Sir Edward Howard, the Lord High Admiral, whose vessel, the *Regent* of 1000 tons, which took fire during the action, is said to have had a crew of 700 men. All the vessels of 200 tons and upwards, in this fleet, were first called "ships royal." The pay of the admiral at this time, was 10*s*. a day; the captains were allowed 1*s*. 6*d*.; and "every soldier, mariner and gunner, had 5*s*. a month for his wages, and 5*s*. for his diet," in addition to certain allowances called *dead shares*, granted to the fleet.

In 1515, the *Harry Grace de Dieu*, of 1000 tons, the first double-decked ship ever built in this country, was launched at Erith, on the Thames. This vessel mounted seventy-two pieces of cannon, of almost all the various sizes then in use; and it was not until the middle of the following century, that guns of the same calibre were placed on the same deck—an important improvement. Her regular establishment consisted of 349 soldiers, 301 mariners, and 50 gunners, making altogether, 700 men.

The imposing number of guns carried by the *Harry*, and other ships at this period, however, seems to have been for little else than show; for it is mentioned by an old writer, as a remarkable circumstance, that in an action between a British and French fleet, off St. Helen's, in 1545, "300 cannon-shot were fired on both sides."

Henry the Eighth, was the last English monarch that hired foreign ships in time of war; for with all his exertions, the British fleet was often partly composed of Hambro', Lubec, Dantzic, Genoese, or Venetian auxiliaries. In order to remedy this, as far as it was possible, an act was passed to encourage British merchants to build ships for their own service, fit for men-of-war, enacting, that such ships should be exempted from certain duties, and that when required for the nation, their owners should receive 12s. per ton per month, for their use. In 1546, the first regular list of the navy was published, from which we learn, that it then consisted of "20 shippes, 15 Gallies, 10 Pynnaces, and 13 Roo Barges," amounting to 12,455 tons, and navigated by 8546 seamen. The expense of maintaining the navy in 1549, was under 17,000*l*.

Queen Elizabeth, seems to have been deeply impressed with the truth of her father's maxim, that "whosoever commands the sea, commands the trade of the world; and that whosoever commands the trade, commands the riches of the world, and, consequently, the world itself." She so greatly encouraged the prosperity of the marine, that she justly acquired the distinguished title of "Restorer of naval power, and Sovereign of the northern seas." The most interesting event in this reign, is the defeat and dispersion of the *invincible* Spanish Armada*; it consisted of 130 ships, of an aggregate burden of 57,868 tons, carrying 2,630 pieces of cannon, 19,295 soldiers, and navigated by 10,538 mariners and slaves; besides which, there was an immense fleet of smaller vessels, loaded with stores, and with arms, which it was intended to distribute to those by whom the Spaniards hoped to be joined on their arrival in England. At this period, the Queen had thirty-four ships in an efficient state, besides eight others in dock. The former were of an aggregate burden of 12,590 tons, and navigated by 6,279 men; the weight of metal is not accurately known, but it is supposed, that the largest vessel carried about sixty guns. By the aid, however, of merchant-vessels, the Queen was enabled to bring about 140 ships into service. The English fleet, commanded by Charles Lord Howard, of Effingham, assisted by Sir Francis Drake, Sir John Hawkins, and other illustrious naval heroes, put out from Plymouth, and after harassing the Spaniards in their passage up the Channel, joined another squadron off Calais, where they came to an engagement with the enemy, in which he suffered such great loss, that the Spanish Admiral endeavoured to retreat to Spain, without attempting to effect any of the objects of the expedition. But this design was not permitted by Providence, for a series of violent storms completely broke up and dispersed the remainder of this mighty armament, a great portion of which was wrecked on the coasts of the British isles; and more than 20,000 men are said to have perished, from the effects of war and the elements. During the remainder of her reign, Elizabeth greatly harassed the Spaniards at sea.

Gunpowder, which had previously been imported from abroad, at a great expense, was now first manufactured in this country.

The reign of James the First, was one of the most inglorious in our naval annals; but the encouragement which had been given to the marine during the preceding reign, greatly fanned the flame of naval enterprise and discovery. Great improvements were also made in the construction of ships; James the First wisely patronized Phineas Pett, who has been styled "the most able and scientific shipwright that this country has ever boasted of;" he reduced the cumbrous top-works which had previously disfigured our vessels; strengthened them with cross-beams, and materially increased their length. In allusion to this subject, Sir Walter Raleigh remarks in his *Discourse on the Invention of Shipping*, "In my own time the shape of our English ships hath been greatly bettered. It is not long since the striking of the top-mast hath been devised; together with the chain-pump. We have lately added the bonnet and drabber (sails.) To the courses we have devised studding-sails, top-gallant-sails, sprit-sails, and top-sails. The weighing of anchors by the capstan is also new. We have fallen into consideration of the length of

cables, and by it we resist the malice of the greatest winds that can blow. We have also raised our second decks." The "navy estimates," at this period, were about £80,000.

In the earlier part of the troublous reign of Charles the First, various important expeditions were fitted out against the French and Spaniards. This unfortunate monarch, in despite of the difficulties which beset his career, almost from the commencement of his reign, greatly improved and extended the naval power of the country. Many ships of a large class were constructed, amongst which the "Sovereign of the Seas," a magnificent vessel, built by Peter Pett, under the direction of Phineas Pett, at Woolwich, in 1635-7, is the most celebrated.

This ship, of which we give an engraving, (p. 89,) was the largest hitherto built in England; her model was considered excellent; and she was in nearly all the celebrated actions with the Dutch in the seventeenth century. From a description written by Thomas Heywood, we learn that she was gorgeously decorated with carved-work:—"she was (he says) in length, by the keel, 128 feet; her main breadth, 48 feet; in length, from the fore-end of the beak-head, to the after-end of the stern, 232 feet; in height, from the bottom of her keel, to the top of her lantern, 76 feet; bore ten lanterns, the biggest of which would hold ten persons upright; had three flush-decks, a fore-castle, half-deck, and round-house. She hath eleven anchors, one of which is 4400 lbs. weight, and is of the burden of 1637 tons." She was pierced for 132 guns, amongst which were what were called fourteen "murdering-pieces." The *Sovereign of the Seas* was cut down afterwards, with great advantage to her sailing qualities; she was nearly rebuilt in 1684, when her name was changed to the *Royal Sovereign*; but was destroyed by fire at Chatham, in January, 1696, having been sixty years in service*.

The direction of the navy was finally wrested from the king in 1642. Six years afterwards, Prince Rupert carried away twenty-five ships, none of which ever returned; and such was the reduced state of the navy at the commencement of Cromwell's usurped government, that he had only fourteen two-decked vessels. Extraordinary exertions were, however, made; in the following year, the Parliament recovered their supremacy at sea; Blake and other distinguished officers were appointed, and in 1654, the fleet was increased to 150 sail, manned by 20,000 seamen, whose pay was then raised from 19s. to 24s. per month.

In 1649, the *Constant Warwick*, the first frigate, according to Pepys, which had ever been built in England, was launched; but Mr. James, in his *Naval History*, is of opinion that the *Southampton*, 32, built in 1757, was the first vessel answering to the modern description of a frigate, as she carried her guns on a single whole-deck, a quarter-deck, and a fore-castle.

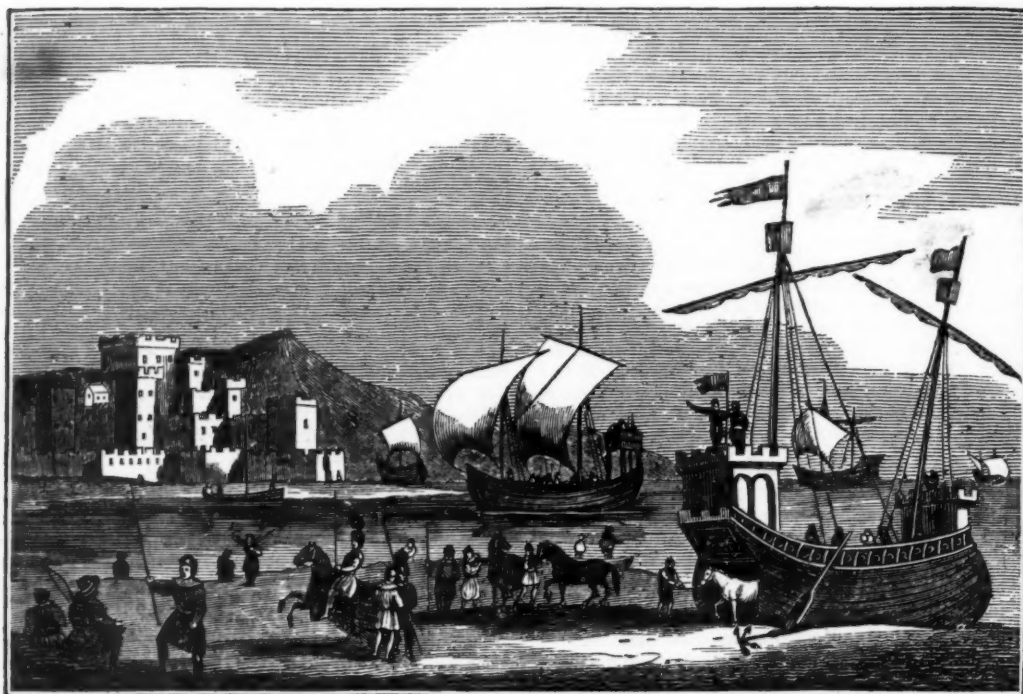
In 1652, a war broke out with Holland, which lasted until April, 1654. During this contest, many severe and memorable actions took place between the English and Dutch fleets, under the command of Admirals Blake and Van Tromp, which gave rise to some of the most interesting passages in our naval history.

In 1655, the important Island of Jamaica was annexed to the British dominions. Two years afterwards, Blake executed the most brilliant naval exploit which has, perhaps, ever been recorded: the destruction of the Spanish West India Flota in the harbour of Santa Cruz,—"an action so miraculous," says Clarendon, "that all men who knew the place, wondered how any sober men, with what courage soever endowed, would ever have undertaken it; and they could hardly persuade themselves to believe what they had done! Whilst the Spaniards comforted themselves with the belief that they were devils, and not men, who had destroyed them in that manner." At the death of Cromwell, in 1658, the navy consisted of 157 vessels, maintained at an annual charge of £400,000. Naval estimates were first laid before Parliament at this period.

The reign of Charles the Second was fruitful in naval glory. Mr. Pepys remarks, that that monarch "possessed a transcendent mastery in all maritime knowledge;" he paid great attention to the welfare of the navy, and appointed his brother, the Duke of York, (James the Second,) Lord High Admiral, shortly after the Restoration in 1660. There were two wars with Holland during this reign; the first continued from February, 1665 until 1668;

* The first division of the British Navy into rates, was made by command of Charles the First, in 1626. These rates were, as now, six in number, each consisting of two classes, to which different complements of men were assigned.

* See *Saturday Magazine*, Vol. III., p. 92.



SHIPPING OF THE REIGN OF HENRY III.—1269.

and the last, which broke out in 1671, was not concluded until 1674. The victory off Lowestoffe, on the 2nd of June, 1665, by the English fleet, under the command of the Lord High Admiral, was the most splendid which had hitherto taken place. The relative loss of the combatants appears almost incredible;—upwards of fifty Dutch ships, and 6000 men were destroyed, whilst the English only lost one vessel, the *Charity*, of 46 guns, and 590 men killed and wounded. The jealousy of the Dutch at the rapidly-increasing commerce and naval power of England, was not diminished by the result of these contests, which, however, nearly exhausted the resources of both countries.

James the Second, who had, whilst Lord High Admiral, gained considerable reputation as a naval commander, made extraordinary efforts, during his short and disturbed reign, for the restoration of the marine, which, during the latter years of Charles the Second, had fallen greatly to decay.

At the period of the Revolution, in 1688, the French had attained a very high rank as a naval power. Louis the Fourteenth, then in the noon-tide of his prosperity, embraced the cause of the dethroned monarch, and a war, which lasted eight years, broke out between the two countries in 1689. During this period, such was the vigorous administration of William the Third, that the navy was increased more than one-half, both in numbers and in tonnage; and, at the conclusion of the war, in 1697, the French had received indisputable proofs of the superiority of the English at sea, amongst which the memorable action off Cape la Hogue, in 1692, may be adduced as an instance. In 1691 Plymouth Dock-yard was established.

In 1696 that most princely of institutions, Greenwich Hospital, was founded. The pay of flag-officers, commanders, lieutenants, masters, and surgeons, was nearly doubled, and the naval estimates were increased to 2,000,000*l.* during this reign.

Shortly after the accession of Anne, a war broke out with France and Spain, in the course of which fifty-two French ships, carrying 3092 guns, were captured.

But little attention appears to have been paid to the navy in the reign of George the First; during the war with Spain, however, (1718-20,) a splendid victory was gained off Sicily, by Sir George Byng, afterwards Lord Torrington.

George the Second entered into another war with Spain in 1739, in consequence of which the sizes of the various classes of our ships of war were considerably increased. France joined in the contest against Britain in 1744, but at its conclusion in 1748, the naval strength of the country, so far from being weakened, was greatly advanced; the enemy's loss, however, was very great; thirty-five French

and Spanish ships of the line alone having been either captured or destroyed.

In 1744, all prizes taken by His Majesty's ships were, by royal proclamation, declared to be henceforth the property of the captors, a measure equally to be commended on the score of its wisdom and its justice. The year 1747 is memorable for the victories gained respectively by Lord Anson and Admiral Hawke over the French. Our loss during this war only consisted of one seventy-gun ship, and a few vessels of a small class.

Another war broke out with France in 1755. During the few intervening years of peace, considerable attention had been paid to the navy; many new vessels were built, and improvements made in naval architecture; in January, 1756, it consisted of 320 vessels of the various classes. Two brilliant victories were gained over the enemy in 1759, by Admiral Boscawen and Sir Edward Hawke; many prizes were made, and such was the rapid increase of the navy, that, at the king's decease in 1760, it consisted of 412 ships, 127 of which were of the line.

We now enter upon the reign of George the Third, a period in every respect the most interesting and important in our naval annals.

SECTION III. (1760—1833.)

Few princes ever ascended a throne under happier auspices than George the Third. The naval superiority of the country had been placed, by a series of glorious successes, beyond all dispute; and its commerce and internal prosperity were increasing in an extraordinary degree.

In January, 1762, England declared war against Spain; it, however, lasted only for a short period, a general peace being concluded at Paris in February, 1763, between France, Spain, Great Britain, and Portugal. The enemy's loss during this war (1755-63), was very heavy; 111 vessels, (93 French and 18 Spanish,) including 42 line-of-battle ships, being taken and destroyed, whilst our own loss only consisted of nine vessels, the largest of which was of fifty guns, a fact almost incredible. Fifty sail of the line, and ninety-four smaller vessels, were built during this war, most of which were constructed in merchants' yards. In the following year (1764,) Parliament granted 10,000*l.* to Mr. Harrison for his time-piece for discovering the longitude.

The *Aurora* frigate, on board which the celebrated Falconer, author of the *Shipwreck*, served as purser, was lost in 1771; she is supposed to have foundered at sea, but her fate remains a mystery.

The disastrous contest between Great Britain and her

Colonies in North America broke out in 1775. The disaffection of the Americans to the British Government had been progressively gaining strength since November, 1768; and, on the 19th of April, in the former year, hostilities at last commenced between the Royalists and Republicans at Lexington. In January, 1776, the navy consisted of 131 ships of the line, and 209 vessels below fifty guns, a smaller force than the country had possessed for the preceding twenty years. The war with America, however, infused fresh vigour into the Admiralty, which has never since been relaxed. On the 4th of July, 1776, Congress disclaimed all allegiance to the British crown, and declared the Americans to be a free and independent nation. In February, 1778, France concluded a treaty of alliance against England with her revolted Colonies. In this year the British navy was increased to 450 vessels. A princely present was made, in the following year, by the East India Company to the nation, of three ships, of seventy-four guns.

War was declared against Spain in 1779, and against Holland in 1780. In the former year, a great sensation was produced throughout the country, by the appearance of the united fleets of France and Spain off Plymouth, during a cruise in the channel. In January, 1780, Admiral Rodney took and destroyed twenty-nine sail of Spanish ships, seven of which were of the first class. In August, fifty-five sail of British merchantmen, including five Indiamen, were captured by the united fleets of France and Spain. On the 23rd of September, a gallant action took place between his Majesty's ship *Serapis*, Captain Pearson, and Paul Jones, the celebrated privateer.

The year 1781, is memorable for the operations of Admiral Rodney in the West Indies, and for the severe, but undecisive engagement, between the British and Dutch fleets, under Admirals Parker and Zoutman, off the Dogger Bank: one Dutch seventy-four was sunk, but no prizes were made. In January, 1782, such had been the exertions made by the Admiralty, that the British fleet consisted of 600 vessels, 161 of which, were line-of-battle ships. In April, 1782, Lord Rodney gained a brilliant victory over a French fleet in the West Indies; five ships of the line were taken, and one sunk, amongst which was that of the Admiral de Grasse.

In October, a severe but undecisive action took place, between an English fleet of 34 sail of the line, under Lord Howe, and the combined fleets of France and Spain, of 46 ships of the line, off Gibraltar. On the 3rd of September, 1783, peace was concluded between Britain, France, and the United States. Our navy then consisted

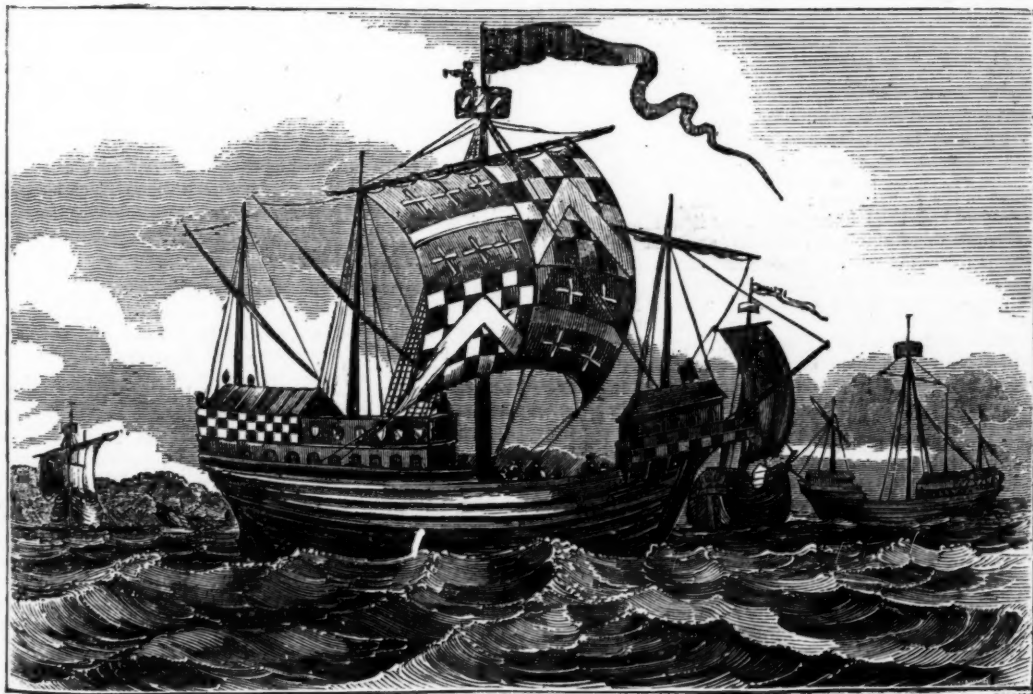
of 617 vessels, of 500,781 tons burden, being an increase of 157,000 tons, since His Majesty's accession. Eighty-seven of the enemy's ships, from 110 to 20 guns, besides a large number of smaller vessels, and several American frigates, had been taken or destroyed during the war; our loss was much larger than we had sustained in any previous war, thirty-one ships, from 74 to 20 guns, and about 50 smaller vessels, being lost; but such was the activity of the government, that no less than 100 ships were on the stocks at the conclusion of the war; eighty-three of which were building in merchants' yards.

FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

At the commencement of the French Revolution, in 1789, the navy had never been in a more efficient condition; and in February, 1791, ninety-eight ships of the line alone, were either commissioned or at sea. The threatening aspect assumed by France, the protection required for our extended commerce, of which, in fact, we might be almost said to enjoy a monopoly, and the safety of our immense colonies, rendered such precautions a matter not only of prudence, but of necessity.

On the 1st of February, 1793, the French Convention at last declared war against Great Britain and Holland. The principal naval events in that year, were the surrender of Toulon, with its arsenal and shipping, to a British fleet under Lord Hood; the siege of Dunkirk; and several gallant single actions between British and French ships; the most remarkable of which, was the capture of the *Réunion*, 38-gun frigate, by the *Crescent*, 36, Captain Sir James Saumarez; 138 men, out of 310 in the former, were killed and wounded, but not a single British seaman in the *Crescent* received the slightest injury.

The year 1794, is memorable for the victory gained by Lord Howe, on the glorious first of June, when the naval power of the French republicans was first effectually humbled. Lord Howe was at sea with the Channel fleet, more than three weeks before he fell in with the enemy; during this period, the most intense anxiety prevailed in England, as it was known, that twenty-seven French ships of the line had sailed from Brest, on the 16th of May, under the command of Admiral Villaret, an officer of great merit and experience. The enemy was first discovered on the 28th of May; the British Admiral immediately gave chase, but owing to the stormy state of the weather a partial action only took place; a fog separated the combatants during the two following days, but at length, on Sunday morning, the 1st of June, the sun rose



SHIPS OF THE REIGN OF EDWARD IV.—1462.*

bright and clear, and discovered the hostile fleets within sight of each other. In point of numbers they were nearly equal, twenty-six French ships of the line being opposed to twenty-five British, but the former were greatly superior in size and weight of metal. At fifty-two minutes past nine, the Royal Charlotte opened her fire; the action soon became general, and did not entirely cease until four o'clock. The damage sustained by the British fleet was inconsiderable, for at the conclusion of the engagement, fifteen sail of the line were almost uninjured; seven French ships were taken, one of which sunk, with 420 of her crew, before they could be removed. Lord Howe has been severely censured for allowing the French Admiral to escape with the remainder of his ships, five of which were dismasted; and it has been proved beyond a doubt, that had he burnt his prizes and given chase, nearly the whole of the enemy's force would have been captured. This circumstance was, however, overlooked, in the universal rejoicing which spread over the land, when the glorious tidings of the victory became known.

Amongst the many gallant actions which took place in 1796, was the defeat of a squadron of six French frigates by the *Glutton*, 64, under the command of Captain Trollop, and the engagement between the *Minerve*, 36, Commodore Nelson, and two Spanish frigates, one of which was taken, and the other beaten off. In December, a large French fleet, with 20,000 soldiers on board, arrived in Bantry Bay, Ireland; but, as in the case of the Spanish Armada, they were unable to land the troops, and dispersed with great loss by the violence of the weather.

On the 14th of February, 1797, a great victory was gained by Sir John Jervis (afterwards Earl St. Vincent), over the Spanish fleet, off the cape of that name. The British force consisted of fifteen sail of the line, four frigates, and two smaller vessels; whilst the Spaniards had twenty-seven sail of the line, ten frigates, and a brig, all of superior size and weight of metal. This glorious victory may be attributed to the skill and presence of mind of the immortal Nelson, (in the *Captain*, 74,) who had, for several years previously, been reaping a rich harvest of fame in the Mediterranean. He disobeyed a signal which was made by the Admiral, to tack in succession, which he perceived would be followed with disastrous consequences: this brought him at once singly into action with the *Santissima Trinidad*, 136, the *San Joseph*, and *Salvador del Mundo*, each 112, and four other first-rate ships; for nearly an hour did Nelson, supported alone by Sir T. Troubridge in the *Culloden*, nobly maintain an action with this immense force; two of which, the *San Joseph* 112, and *San Nicholas*, 80, he ultimately boarded and captured. The enemy lost four ships, and nearly 6000 men killed, wounded, and prisoners, during the action; our own loss only consisted of 300 men.

On the 14th of April, the country was thrown into a state of consternation by an alarming mutiny in the Channel-fleet off Spithead. Since the reign of Charles the Second, notwithstanding the great increase which had taken place in the price of every necessary of life, no addition had been made to the pay or allowances of the seamen in the Royal Navy; their urgent remonstrances on the subject had been disregarded, but it was now found to be a measure of absolute necessity, as it certainly was of common justice, to redress these grievances: several lives were, however, sacrificed during the mutiny. A still more dangerous mutiny broke out on the 27th of May, in the North Sea fleet, fifteen sail of which was then under the command of Admiral Duncan in Yarmouth Roads, bound to the Texel. The demands of the mutineers were exceedingly preposterous; and they insisted, amongst other things, that seamen should, in future, sit on courts martial, where one of their own class was tried. Most of the ships then deserted the admiral, several joining the fleet then at the Nore, which was also in the highest state of insubordination. Here they placed themselves under the command of a man named Richard Parker, who sent delegates with fresh propositions to the Board of Admiralty, then at Sheerness, which were at once rejected. The mutineers then carried off some gun-boats out of Sheerness-harbour, after firing at the garrison. On the 29th of May, they blockaded the mouth of the Thames, not permitting a single vessel to pass, except a few fishing-boats and neutrals, who received an order signed by Parker. The consternation in London, and indeed throughout the empire, now became very great, and the 3 per cent consols fell to 74½. Parker threatened to put to sea, and deliver up, or sell

the fleet to the enemy. This, however, caused great disgust amongst the less violent of the mutineers, and symptoms of insubordination began to appear. The greatest exertions were now made by government; the buoys along the coast were taken up, and the forts at Tilbury, Gravesend, Sheerness, &c., were strongly fortified, and provided with heated shot. On the 9th of June, the fleet refused to obey Parker's signal to put to sea; and on the 13th he was deserted by all the ships, when he surrendered in the *Sandwich*, was put into irons, and executed on board that vessel, on the 29th of the month. Several others were soon afterwards executed. This mutiny extended to the fleet off Cadiz, under Earl St. Vincent, but it was suppressed by his firmness and decision.

In July, an unsuccessful expedition was undertaken against Teneriffe; Nelson, who commanded, lost his right arm, and 250 men were killed and wounded. On the 10th of October, Admiral Duncan gained a splendid and decisive victory over the Dutch fleet, off the coast of Holland, taking nine sail of the line.

The year 1798, in many respects one of the most important in our naval history, was distinguished by the BATTLE OF THE NILE, "a victory," says Dr. Southey, "the most complete and glorious in our annals; 'Victory' said Nelson, 'was not a name strong enough for such a scene;' he called it a conquest." Of the enemy's fleet of thirteen sail of the line, and four frigates, nine of the former were taken, and two burnt; Bruyxx, the French Admiral, an officer of great ability, was killed, and his ship the *l'Orient*, of 130 guns, blown up*; two frigates were also destroyed, and of the whole French force, only four ships succeeded in making their escape. "The British loss in killed and wounded, was 875. Westcott was the only captain who fell; 3105 of the French, including the wounded, were sent on shore by cartel, and 5225 perished." Nelson was now at the summit of his glory.

In 1799, amongst other splendid naval actions, was the surrender of the Dutch fleet in the Texel, to the English squadron under Admiral Mitchell. In March 1800, the *Queen Charlotte*, 110, blew up at Leghorn, and Captain Todd, with 800 of his crew, lamentably perished. At the latter end of this year, a confederation was entered into in the North, against England, between Russia, Prussia, Sweden, and Denmark. In consequence of this confederacy, it was determined by the British Government, in the following spring, to send an expedition against Denmark, which then possessed a navy of twenty-three ships of the line, and about thirty-one frigates and smaller vessels.

On the 2nd of April, the British fleet, under the command of Sir Hyde Parker, with whom was Lord Nelson, entered the Sound. On the 4th, Lord Nelson, who commanded in the action, destroyed nearly the whole of the Danish fleet, after an obstinate engagement, bombarded Copenhagen, and obliged that government to enter into an armistice, which put an end to the armed neutrality of the North. On the 12th of July, Sir James Saumarez, with only five ships under his command, defeated a French squadron of ten ships of the line, two of which blew up, after engaging the *Superb*, 74, commanded by Captain (now Sir Richard) Keats.

On the 1st of October, the navy consisted of 864 vessels, (including 180 line-of-battle ships,) 763 of which were actually in commission. On the 27th of March, 1802, a treaty of peace was signed at Amiens. During the war, 570 ships had been taken from the enemy; 86 of which were line-of-battle ships, and 209 frigates: our own loss, during this period, only consisted of 59 ships, forty-one of which were small-class vessels! Upwards of 50,000 seamen were employed during the peace, which only lasted until May, 1803, when war was again declared against France and Holland. In December, 1804, at a period when the naval star of Britain shone out brightly, Spain joined in the contest against this country.

The victory off TRAFALGAR, and the DEATH OF NELSON, render 1805 the most interesting year in our naval history. In April, the French and Spanish fleets formed a junction at Cadiz; Nelson, who was then in the Mediterranean, immediately engaged in a pursuit across the Atlantic, which, for its "extent, rapidity, and perseverance," has been pronounced unequalled; but the enemy eluded his grasp, and he was obliged reluctantly to return to England,

* This ship had specie on board (the plunder of Malta,) to the amount of £600,000. sterling.

on the 15th of August. Sir Robert Calder, who had, in the mean time, been also sent out to intercept the enemy's fleet on their return, was more fortunate; he fell in with them off Cape Finisterre, captured two sail of the line, but attempted nothing further. In September, Nelson, on whom the hopes of the nation were once more centred, sailed in the *Victory*, (now the flag-ship at Portsmouth,) for Cadiz, where he assumed the command of the fleet; but did not fall in with the enemy till the 21st of October. "At daybreak, the combined fleets were distinctly seen from the *Victory's* deck, formed in a close line of battle a-head, on the starboard tack, about twelve miles to leeward. Our fleet consisted of twenty-seven sail of the line, and four frigates; theirs of thirty-three, and seven large frigates. Their superiority was greater in size and weight of metal than in numbers. They had four thousand troops on board, and the best riflemen that could be procured, were dispersed through the ships."

Our limits will not permit us even to glance at the details of a victory, which must be familiar to most of our countrymen. Suffice it to say that Nelson's last signal, "ENGLAND EXPECTS EVERY MAN TO DO HIS DUTY," was faithfully obeyed that day. The defeat of the enemy was complete and decisive: twenty ships of the line struck; and four French line-of-battle ships, which had behaved in a most dastardly manner at the close of the action, were taken a few days afterwards by Sir Richard Strachan. But one event darkened the national rejoicing, our country had lost its greatest naval hero. "The death of Nelson," says Dr. Southey, "was felt in England as something more than a public calamity; men started at the intelligence and turned pale; as if they had heard of the loss of a dear friend. So perfectly, indeed, had he performed his part, that the maritime war, after the Battle of Trafalgar, was considered at an end: the fleets of the enemy were not merely defeated, but destroyed; new navies must be built, and a new race of seamen reared for them, before the possibility of their invading our shores could again be contemplated."

Our notices of the numberless naval exploits which distinguished the remaining ten years of the war, must necessarily be brief. A continued career of success contributed to raise the British navy to a magnitude, to which the accumulated navies of the whole world, at any period, bore but a small proportion. In September, 1807, the City of Copenhagen and the Danish fleet once more surrendered to British valour; Lord Cathcart and Admiral Gambier captured eighteen sail of the line and fifteen frigates during the expedition. On the 1st of December, Russia declared war against England, at which period, the number of seamen in the British navy, was 130,000! The naval force at the close of the following year, amounted to 627 ships in commission, and 66 building, of an aggregate burden of nearly 900,000 tons: the larger classes of ships were now greatly increased in burden. In 1810, the country had to deplore the loss of Admiral Lord COLLINGWOOD, who died at sea, off Minorca, on the 6th of March. The period between the years 1806-12, abounds with instances of naval heroism and gallantry. Including ships in ordinary and tenders, there were then seldom less than 1000 pendants floating in the breeze.

On the 18th of June, 1812, war was declared between England and the United States of America. This event gave rise to some of the most interesting passages which have ever distinguished maritime warfare. Frequently largely manned by British seamen, and greatly superior in size and weight of metal, the American navy, for nearly a year after the commencement of the war, had an almost uninterrupted career of success over the British. The *Guerrrière* 38, the *Frolic* brig, the *Macedonian* 38, the *Java* 38, and the *Peacock* 18, were successively captured by American ships. The British name was, however, at last gloriously retrieved, by the action between the *SHANNON* and the *CHESAPEAKE*, an event which we shall detail at length, nearly in the words of one of the most eminent of our naval historians, Captain E. P. Brenton; especially as it conveys a vivid idea of an engagement at sea. We must premise, that the *Shannon* and her opponent were equal in the number of their guns, thirty-eight 18-pounders, but the American was greatly superior in the number of her crew, having 110 men more than the *Shannon*.

Captain P. B. V. Broke, had, for many days previously to the action, been watching the *Chesapeake* as she lay in the harbour at Boston, and on the 1st of June, (1813,) sent in

a challenge to Captain Lawrence, her commander, to come out and fight; promising that no other ship should interfere, whatever might be the event of the battle, and requiring the same pledge from Captain Lawrence. Whether it was in compliance with this challenge, or in obedience to his orders, that the American captain put to sea, is uncertain. The day was fine, with a light breeze, when the *Shannon*, with a blue ensign at her peak, stood in towards Boston. About eleven o'clock, the *Chesapeake* came out of Boston Roads, accompanied by fifty or sixty pleasure-boats and a privateer schooner, to witness the defeat of the English. Much manœuvring then took place: at last, about forty-five minutes past five, the enemy hauled up to within 200 yards of the *Shannon's* weather beam, and gave three cheers. On this, Captain Broke addressed his ship's company, told them that that day would decide the superiority of British seamen, when well trained, over those of other nations, and that the *Shannon* would show in that day's action, how short a time the Americans had to boast when opposed to equal force. The two ships being now not more than a stone's throw asunder, the action commenced by the *Shannon* giving her broadside, beginning with the aftermost guns on the starboard side. The enemy passing too fast ahead to receive more than a second discharge from the aftermost guns, the boarders were ordered to prepare, when the *Chesapeake* attempting to haul her foresail up, fell aboard the *Shannon*, and got entangled with her. Here a sharp fire of musketry took place between the marines of both ships; when this had lasted a few minutes, the enemy appeared to flinch, and Captain Broke, at the head of his boarders, mounted the fore-castle carronade, and leapt on the quarter-deck of the *Chesapeake*, followed by Lieutenant Watt and the marines. This division was supported by the main-deck boarders. Captain Broke, followed by about sixty of his people, put to death all that opposed his passage around the gangway, and drove the Americans below, while the bow-guns of the *Shannon* made dreadful havoc on the main-deck of the enemy. Mr. Comahan, a midshipman of the *Shannon*, placed himself on her main-yard, whence, with musketry, he killed, or wounded, nearly all the men stationed in the main and foretops of the enemy. Captain Broke, in the mean time, with the boarders, had cleared the enemy's quarter-deck, though a little impeded by their fire. Our men gave three cheers, rushed forward, and carrying all before them, united on the fore-castle, and drove the crew of the *Chesapeake* below. It was in making a charge along the larboard-gangway, that Captain Broke nobly saved the life of an American seaman who called for quarter; but the villain, suddenly snatching up a cutlass, gave his deliverer a blow on the back of his head, which had nearly proved fatal at the time, and from the effects of which he has never recovered. The *Shannon's* people instantly cut the miserable man to pieces. The Americans were rallying on the main-deck, when the English made another desperate rush amongst them; and, in fifteen minutes from the commencement of the action, the British flag had supplanted that of America, and the *Chesapeake* was a prize to the *Shannon*. While the contest was proceeding the two ships had separated, and a small British blue ensign had been hoisted at the gaff-end of the *Chesapeake*. Lieutenant Watt, first of the *Shannon*, unfortunately wished to exchange this flag for a large white ensign which he had brought with him for that purpose. The people on board the *Shannon* perceiving that the firing still continued, and that the blue ensign was hauled down, concluded that the enemy had overpowered the small party of Englishmen then on board. Under this natural, but fatal error, they directed their fire at the *Chesapeake's* quarter-deck, killed Lieut. Watt, three of the *Shannon's* men, and wounded some others; nor was it till the small blue ensign was re-hoisted that the firing ceased. The crew of the *Chesapeake* having been driven into the hold of their own ship, a marine sentinel was placed over the main-hatchway, when the Americans treacherously fired up from the hold and killed him. On this our men poured down a heavy fire on them, until they again called for quarter, and promised to deliver up the offender. The prisoners of war were then secured and handcuffed on the orlop-deck. Many of them were drunk and riotous, but the others tranquil and well-behaved.

At seven in the evening, the pleasure-boats and the privateer which had accompanied the *Chesapeake* to the scene of action, returned to the afflicted town of Boston, where suppers and balls had been foolishly prepared for

the anticipated victors and their British captives. The action was one of the most bloody and determined ever fought between two ships of their class in so short a time. The loss on board the Shannon, out of 330 men, was three officers and twenty-three men killed; Captain Broke, two officers, and fifty-eight men wounded; eighty-seven total. On mustering the crew of the Chesapeake the following day, they found she began the action with 440 men, of whom the second lieutenant, master, marine officers, some midshipmen, and ninety seamen and marines were killed; Captain Lawrence mortally wounded, and the first and second lieutenants, some midshipmen, and 110 men also wounded; making a total of killed and wounded between the two ships of nearly 300 men, or twenty men for every minute the ships were in action.

Three American armed vessels were taken by the British during the remainder of this year. In 1814, peace was concluded between the Allied Powers and the French Government. In this and the following year, the American frigates, *Essex* and *President**, were captured by the British frigates, *Phæbe* and *Endymion*, and the ports of the United States were put under blockade by Sir A. Cochrane. In September, 1814, the *Avon*, British eighteen-gun brig was sunk in a desperate action with the American ship-sloop, *Wasp* (of superior force), off Kinsale in Ireland; and shortly after, a small British squadron in Lake Champlain, was captured by an American squadron, after a severe conflict. In 1815, the Battle of Waterloo led to a general peace.

The bombardment of Algiers, and destruction of the Algerine squadron, on the 7th of August, 1816, by the British fleet under Lord Exmouth, and the splendid victory over the Turkish fleet, in the Bay of Navarino, by Sir Edward Codrington, have been the principal naval events since the peace. During the last twenty years, great improvements have been made in naval architecture, especially by Sir Robert Seppings and Captain Symonds; the plans introduced by the latter, since he has held the office of Surveyor of the Navy, have, however, occasioned considerable controversy amongst nautical men: by considerably increasing the breadth of beam, he has greatly added to the tonnage of our men-of-war, a striking instance of which is afforded by the *Vernon*, a frigate launched at Woolwich, in 1832. This splendid vessel, indisputably

the finest frigate in the world, although only pierced for 50 guns, admeasures upwards of 2082 tons burden.

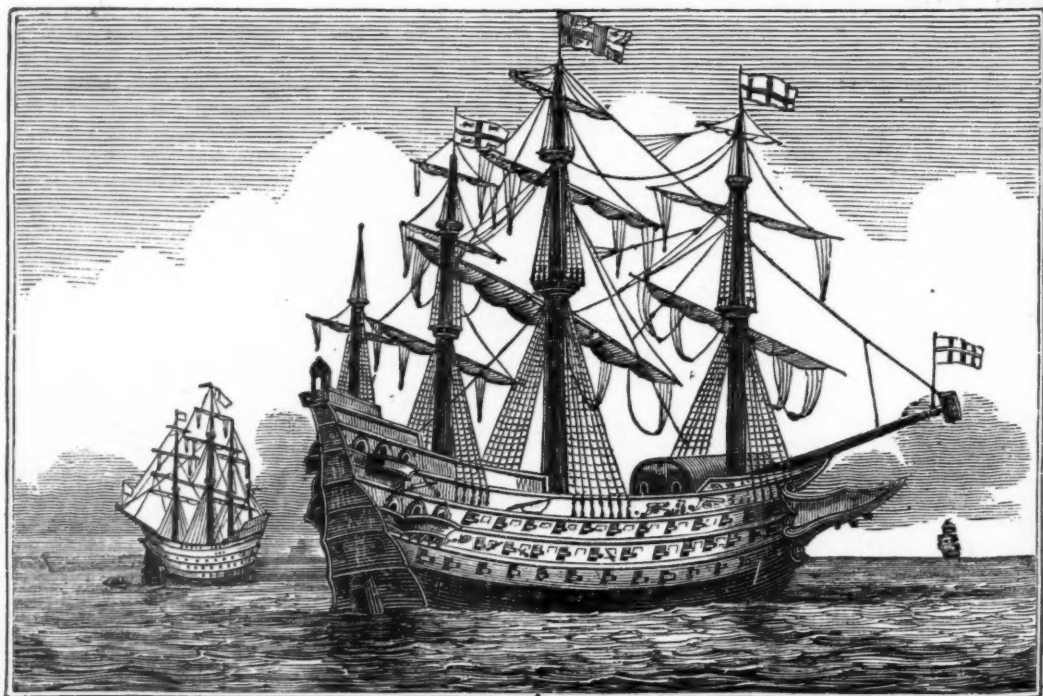
In the event of another war, there is every probability that the incalculably-important invention of steam-navigation will entirely alter the system of naval warfare.

We cannot better conclude this brief notice of the rise and progress of a service, which, under the protection of an all-gracious Providence, has ever been the surest safeguard of our country in the hour of danger, than by an extract from the speech of Sir James Graham, First Lord of the Admiralty, in proposing the Navy Estimates, 1833. After comparing the present state of the navy with that of two antecedent periods, 1778 and 1793, the right hon. baronet said,—“Though the number of vessels which we possessed at the present moment was less than at those periods, the proportion of vessels, of a large rate, had been greatly increased, and the number of men necessary to be employed was also much greater. The naval superiority of this country would be best exemplified by referring to the present force of the three other principal naval powers,—France, Russia, and America. France, at the present time, had thirty-one sail of the line and thirty-seven frigates; Russia, thirty-six sail of the line and twenty-three frigates; and America, eight sail of the line and ten frigates. It would, therefore, be perceived, that this country had nothing to apprehend from an inferiority in her maritime force, which then consisted of 348 ships. It was, indeed, upon the maintenance of her naval power, that England depended for her national character, and her national existence. Let but her naval superiority be once lost, and owing to her insular position, and to various other circumstances, she could no longer maintain her present high rank in the social system, she must necessarily fall into the place of a second-rate power. On the other hand, if we maintain our navy as it ought to be maintained, we have nothing to fear,—England must always be what she is at present, first among the nations of the world.”

The estimates for the British navy, for 1833, amounted to 4,658,134*l.*: and on the 1st of January, 1834, it consisted, according to the official return, of 557 vessels of the various classes, including twelve ships of 120 guns, fourteen from 104 to 112 guns, and twenty-two steam vessels, most of which are armed.

In a future Paper, we purpose giving some account of the rise and present state of the Commercial Shipping of Great Britain, including a History of the Port of London.

* The *President*, however, only struck on the advance of the *Pomone*, another British ship.



THE SOVEREIGN OF THE SEAS.—1837.